



# COGNITIVE BIASES

AND THE STORY OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE



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**TRACOM<sup>®</sup> GROUP**

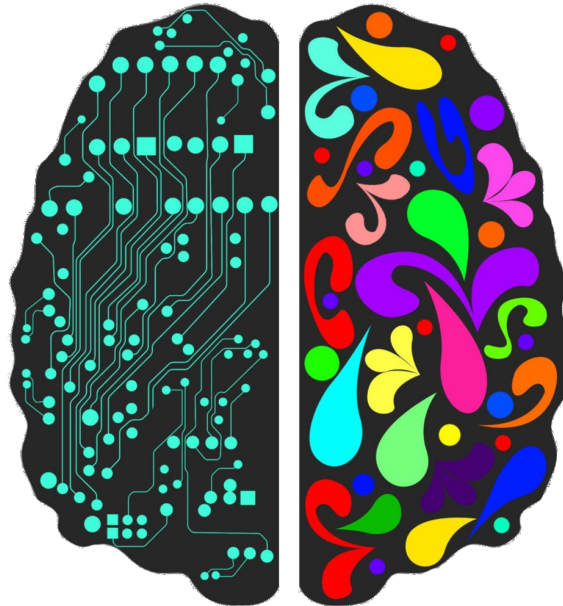
THE SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPANY<sup>®</sup>

All people are affected by cognitive biases that distort how we *Think, Act and React* to the world around us. This happens because our brains are lazy—we look for quick interpretations of events and easy solutions to problems. We develop habits so we don't have to expend energy thinking about what we're doing (because thinking is hard work; our brains consume approximately 20% of the body's energy every day so habits help to save precious energy.) But, the side effect is that we often make mistakes and decisions unaware we are on autopilot. Our brains use shortcuts that interfere with our ability to pay attention to what's going on around us.

When it comes to *Social Intelligence*, these biases affect our ability to communicate, understand and connect with others, innovate, and adapt easily to change. To develop better Social Intelligence, we need to break through these cognitive biases by changing our behavior and habits.

## BIASES AND SOCIAL STYLE®

When communicating and working with others, we are affected by the *Self-Perception Bias*, which influences how we see ourselves and how we interpret others' behavior. First, it causes us to see ourselves inaccurately, meaning we don't have good self-awareness of how we come across to others. Second, this bias causes us to misinterpret the actions of others; when someone does something we don't agree with, we attribute it to their personality or "character" rather than circumstances or simple behavioral style differences. This combination of poor self-awareness and misunderstanding of others creates problems. We fail to recognize one another's



preferences for how to get things done. We communicate and/or interact in ways that reflect our own needs without recognition for the needs and preferences of others.

**Breaking the Bias:** Breaking the *Self-Perception Bias* is as simple as learning about different behavioral styles. With this knowledge, we can adapt how we communicate and work with others. These simple changes lead to greater personal effectiveness. We can become aware of our own behaviors and how they are perceived by others. People then learn how to recognize how their behavior impedes their performance and effectiveness, particularly during stressful times. We also learn to recognize the behavioral styles of others and how to communicate with them in ways that lead to understanding and acceptance. This helps teams and organizations to more effectively achieve small goals or navigate through large-scale change.

**Why SOCIAL STYLE:** SOCIAL STYLE has been applied by thousands of global organizations to improve leadership performance, sales results and overall communications. SOCIAL STYLE is selected by these leading companies and executives because it is highly effective, yet easy to understand and apply.

**How Training Helps:** TRACOM's SOCIAL STYLE training is based on observable behavior learners can apply to quickly identify a person's preferences and make informed choices to make that person comfortable. This ability to moderate your behavior is called Versatility.

**Business Outcomes:** Individuals who apply SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility strategies are better communicators, more effective in leadership roles and build better customer and team relationships.

“Versatility provides practical and actionable guidance to build and continually improve interpersonal relationships.”

# BIASES AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Developing meaningful, impactful relationships with co-workers is important, yet this capability depends on our ability to empathize and connect with others. Unfortunately, this capability is frequently undermined by the **Transparency Bias**, which causes us to believe that others accurately recognize our emotional state, and also to overestimate how accurately we understand others' emotional states. In other words, we think we're open books, when we aren't, and we believe that others are easy to read, when they're not. This bias gets in the way of developing relationships and improving our Emotional Intelligence (EQ). We believe people think like us and therefore we treat them as if they are just like us, experiencing the same beliefs and emotions. Likewise, we think we recognize and understand others' emotions, but we're often wrong, misinterpreting signals. When a co-worker is upset, we often fail to recognize this and treat them as if nothing has happened, discounting their feelings and damaging the relationship.

**Breaking the Bias:** To break the Transparency Bias, people can learn strategies to enhance Behavioral Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Simple behavior change, such as active listening and paying closer attention to people's body language and facial expressions can go a long way towards more accurate understanding of others. Conversely, developing better self-awareness is critical for overcoming the **Transparency Bias**. This can be achieved by listing your emotional triggers—things that cause you to feel stressed, frustrated or angry. This simple act has been shown to lead to greater emotional

understanding and self-control during difficult times. Greater self-insight is also achieved by getting regular feedback on strengths and weaknesses.

Hard as it is to receive feedback, it's critical for overcoming this bias and developing better relationships. Connecting better with others helps work performance and has been identified as one of the most critical skills for the future.

**Why Behavioral EQ:** The modern workplace calls for a new kind of emotional intelligence training model focused on the most practically important aspects of EQ and focused specifically on modern workplace challenges.

**How Training Helps:** TRACOM's research shows that the behavioral elements of EQ training — the aspects of the model that focus on our actions — lead to the most visible and meaningful improvements. Employees demonstrate more empathy and are more collaborative.

**Business Outcomes:** Improving behavioral aspects of EQ has been proven to be one of the best predictors of job performance and success.



*Behavioral EQ helps to shape the culture of an organization.*

*As HR professionals we're sought out to solve problems; but, if we're given the opportunity to not only solve but to understand the root cause of those problems, we can educate the organization to look deeper than the surface of some of the challenges we may face.*

# BIASES AND PERSONAL AGILITY

The importance of creating new concepts and ways of doing things has never been clearer. The modern era demands agility from individuals and organizations. But our ability to be agile is affected by the **Tunnel Vision Bias**, which causes us to focus on narrow goals and priorities, missing other possibilities and opportunities. We're reluctant to consider alternatives to our line of thinking, or are so focused on what we think is the correct approach that we shut ourselves off to different ways of solving problems. The consequence of this bias is that people, teams and organizations aren't truly open to new ways of doing things. Even when organizations espouse the need for innovation, this bias is still holding them back.

**Breaking the Bias:** Breaking the **Tunnel Vision Bias** can be achieved through strategies to enhance experimentation and openness in how things are done. As an example, idea-generation strategies that require people to think of unusual ideas that may, at first, seem awful. The bad ideas themselves won't work, however, bad ideas often contain the roots of good ideas, so this technique forces a subtle behavior change that overcomes the Tunnel Vision Bias. People become comfortable with experimentation, risk and ambiguity. This, in turn, helps teams by giving people the tools they need to be more inventive and influential, and more open to unique ideas and perspectives, to changing processes and procedures, to viewing markets and customers through different lenses. Agility is a fundamental capability that will distinguish successful organizations of the future.

**Why Agility:** The ability to be Agile has implications for almost every job function and department including sales, customer service and even the back office. Agile people and organizations shape their futures and markets.

**How Training Helps:** TRACOM's Unlocking Agility program helps organizations develop an adaptive mindset, alongside innovation strategies, to overcome the Tunnel Vision bias. Agile companies foster innovation and evolve more successfully than their competitors by capitalizing on opportunities emerging around them.

**Business Outcomes:** Agile people are 22% more likely to view failure as a learning opportunity and Agile people are 17% more likely to make high-quality decisions in the face of uncertainty.

“ *The demand for Agility skills is significant and universal. Our leaders identified these skills as critical to our business, and relevant to our people at all levels.* ”

## BIASES AND RESILIENCE

Our ability to recover and move forward during disruptive change and adversity is affected by the **Negativity Bias**, which causes us to focus on the “bad” more than the “good.” The Negativity Bias evolved to help us survive dangers in our environment— wild animals, poisonous food and severe weather were just some of the threats that needed to be avoided. In the modern world, the fight/flight/ freeze response is more often triggered by perceived threats to our psychological safety, such as feeling powerless in the face of change. This bias



affects our beliefs, attitudes and responses to change and holds us back from coping with difficulties and, eventually, from being able to move forward in a way that leads to personal growth and opportunity.

**Breaking the Bias:** The **Negativity Bias** is broken by a number of behavioral strategies that help people build different areas of Resilience, such as realistic optimism, problem solving and self composure in the face of change, and social support to buffer against hard times. Fundamentally, people learn to recognize the automatic thoughts that all people have in reaction to stressful events. These automatic thoughts are almost always negative, perceiving events as threats.

For example, when a change is announced at work, many people will invent a catastrophe for themselves, believing that the worst possible outcome is the most likely. This, in turn, affects their ability to be proactive and ensure that the change benefits them. Understanding this bias and adopting strategies to help build personal Resilience will help organizations successfully navigate large-scale change in the future.

**Why Resilience:** Resilience is the capacity to adapt to change, adversity and stressors in a way that allows people to bounce back, but also to bounce forward – to grow and improve.

**How Training Helps:** TRACOM's Adaptive Mindset for Resiliency programs teach people to replace their Negativity Bias with a new outlook and provide practical strategies for improved resilience and productivity. It then teaches practical techniques to recognize when the bias is occurring and strategies to reduce/eliminate its negative outcomes.

**Business Outcomes:** Resilient individuals are more engaged, less resistant to change and more emotionally prepared to contribute at work.

“ *We believe we can help people recognize the opportunities that come with change and develop the mindset to embrace it.* ”

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